

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Luke 23:33-35.**
- B. Jesus said seven things while on the cross. One of the greatest of these was the prayer He offered. This morning's sermon is an in-depth look at X's words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

I. THE RECOGNITION OF HIS PRAYER.

- A. His prayer is the fulfillment of prophecy (Isa 53:12).
Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.
- B. Jesus might have prayed for justice, and/or retribution, but He prays for pardon.
- C. Forgive here means to dismiss, remit, or send away. Forgiveness is one of the great themes of the entire ministry of X.
 - 1. Jesus taught us to forgive others, so that we might be forgiven (Mt. 6:14,15).
"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."
 - 2. When we pray, we are to pray for forgiveness and practice forgiveness (Mt. 6:12; Mk. 11:25).
(Mt 6:12) 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'
(Mk 11:25) "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions."
 - 3. Jesus taught that we should continually forgive (Mt. 18:21-22).
Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" **22** Jesus said^ to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."
 - 4. God is faithful in His forgiveness of sins to us (1Jn. 1:9).
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

II. THE RECIPIENTS OF HIS PRAYER.

- A. Who is the "them" that Jesus prays for?
- B. Five possibilities:
 - 1. The guards, actually doing the crucifixion.
 - 2. The people who have called for his blood (Ac. 3:17).
"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also."
 - 3. Those living in Jerusalem (Ac. 13:27).
"For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him."
 - 4. The rulers of the people in Jerusalem (1Cor. 2:8).
...the wisdom which none of **the rulers of this age** has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;...
 - 5. Ultimately, the whole world (2Cor. 5:15).
...and **He died for all**, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

III. THE REALM OF HIS PRAYER.

- A. There are two LEVELS of forgiveness at work here.
- B. First, forgiveness on the human level.
Jesus, as a person was practicing what He preached in Mt. 5:44-45; 6:14-15.

(Mt 5:44-45) “But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you **45** in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

(Mt 6:14-15) “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15** “But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

C. Second, forgiveness on the Divine level.

This forgiveness took place on Pentecost to those who obeyed the gospel (Ac. 2:38).

And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

D. *An important point:* By understanding these two realms or levels of forgiveness we can see that God wants us to forgive others, even if they never seek forgiveness from God.

IV. THE **REALITY** OF HIS PRAYER.

A. The people who sinned in putting Jesus on the cross were not automatically forgiven by His prayer and death.

B. Ignorance is not bliss, it is not a basis of forgiveness. “...they know not what they do” can mean that they did not understand the gravity and power of their sin. They do not understand the overall plan of God in saving the world in this way.

C. Calvary was part of God’s over-all plan to save the world. Had the rulers of the world at that time understood it, they would not have participated in it!

D. This verse should not be used to try and teach that one can have salvation w/o repentance. Paul said (as did Jesus) that the world was acting in ignorance, but later due to the preaching of the gospel the world would come to know reality of what was taking place. They will see their need to believe in the power of the crucifixion, repent of their sins (including ignorance), and be obedient to God.

E. Jesus’ prayer is one of intercession for those who are impenitent (don’t understand the reality of what is going on at Calvary). His death is forgiveness to all who will believe in what happened there and repent (1Tim. 4:10).

For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

V. THE **REALIZATION** OF HIS PRAYER.

A. Four things can be learned from this great prayer.

B. First, it is our duty to pray for our enemies—even when they are endeavoring to hurt us.

C. Second, the thing to pray for is that God would pardon them, and give them a better understanding of their sinful conduct.

D. Third, the power and excellence of the Xian religion. No other religion teaches men to pray for their enemies. The world seeks revenge, justice, etc. The Xian seeks divine pardon of those who injure them.

E. Fourth, the greatest of sinners may receive pardon from God.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

A. The greatest event of all history--the death, burial and resurrection of X.

B. Believe it, and obey the One who died for you.

C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.